

Choking

Blockage of the airway in children younger than age 1



Signs

- Baby is coughing; sometimes the cough is forceful and other times it is weak. The baby may make a high-pitched sound while coughing.
- Baby may not be able to breathe or cough and may appear to be struggling to breathe.
- Baby could have blue lips and fingers, body limpness and loss of consciousness.



What to Know

Choking is the fourth leading cause of death in young children. Older babies instinctively put things into their mouths, which may lead to choking.

- Never prop a bottle for your baby to drink alone.
- Stay with the baby during meals or snack time.
- Finger foods are not advised until after 6 months of age.
- Cut food into small bites and discourage playing, talking or laughing while eating.
- Avoid feeding your baby popcorn, nuts, hard candy, hot dogs, raw carrots, grapes, apple chunks or raisins (these foods are not recommended for children younger than 3 years of age).
- Don't let your baby play with toys that have small parts (smaller than a 50-cent piece).

- Keep all small objects such as safety pins, nails, tacks, screws, jewelry, buttons and coins out of reach.
- Balloons, whether inflated or not, may become a choking hazard.
- All parents and childcare providers should take a CPR class.



What to Do

- Never interfere when the baby tries to cough, cry or clear his or her throat.
- If the baby can breathe but cannot cough up the swallowed object, call 911 or get medical help right away.
- If you can see the object in the mouth, attempt to remove it with your finger.
Be careful not to push the object into the throat.

If baby is choking and still breathing:

- Hold the baby face down, over your arm with the baby's head lower than the body.
- Support the baby's head with your hand and use your forearm to support the jaw and upper chest. For added support, place your forearm on your leg with the baby's head lower than his or her body.

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- Give 5 quick back blows below the shoulder blades with the heel of your hand.



Positioning an infant for back blows.

- Turn the baby over on his or her back, holding the baby on your other arm. Continue to support and hold the head lower than the body.
- Using 2 fingers, make 5 quick strong presses in the middle of the baby's chest, between the nipples.



Positioning an infant for chest thrusts.

- Check the mouth to see if the object has popped loose. If you can see the object in the mouth, attempt to remove it with your finger. Be careful not to push the object into the throat.
- Check to see if the baby is breathing.
- If your baby is still choking, repeat back blows and chest thrusts and call for emergency help.



When to Call Your Health Care Provider

- If the baby can breathe but cannot cough up the swallowed object, call 911 or get medical help right away.
- Always notify your health care provider after any type of choking episode.

